



## Travis County Community Supervision & Corrections Department

*Charles R. Robinson, Director*  
*Rodolfo Pérez, Jr., Assistant Director*

### **What Is Adult Probation?**

Probation is when a Criminal Court defers a sentence to jail or prison and orders an offender to comply with Conditions of Probation. Conditions include reporting to a probation officer, paying fees/fines, performing community restitution, abstaining from the use of alcohol/drugs, and often participating in programs. If the offender fails to comply, the Court may revoke probation and impose the sentence.

### **What Do We Provide That Is Of Value?**

We monitor offenders to assure that they comply with the Conditions of Probation.

We strive to change the offender's behavior through a variety of strategies and interventions. Our goal is for an offender to accept personal responsibility and live life as a productive citizen.

Probation offers a less costly alternative to incarceration in jail or prison. Regular supervision costs \$2.92 per day compared to \$50.79 per day in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

In Fiscal Year 2010, offenders performed 194,000 hours of Community Service Restitution at a savings of over \$1.9 million (valued at \$10 per hour).

In addition to traditional Community Service Restitution, offenders contributed more than \$118,000 in food donations to the Capital Area Food Bank.

### **Why Is Travis County Presented as a National Model for Probation Reform?**

Travis County began a major initiative in 2005 with the support and assistance of Dr. Tony Fabelo (Council of State Governments) to strengthen probation supervision using what is commonly referred to as evidence-based practices. This initiative is called Travis Community Impact Supervision or TCIS.

### **What Is TCIS?**

TCIS involves reengineering the department to support strategies that research show to be effective in managing the risk of the probation population. TCIS includes two critical elements of a strong probation system: 1) enforcement of the conditions of probation, and 2) providing offenders with the resources and motivation to effect change by addressing their criminogenic traits. The key is to use methods that have been proven to work – thus, the term “Evidence-Based.”

### **What Have We Done?**

The Department has accomplished a broad reorganization that changed and strengthened the internal processes and culture of the organization to promote evidence-based practices.

The Department worked with the Judiciary and prosecutors to create and implement a Centralized Diagnostic Unit using objective assessment criteria to improve the quality of information provided to the Courts on defendant's being considered for probation.

The Department re-organized caseloads and identified efficiencies to reduce caseloads and improve the quality of supervision. The driving goal was that resources should be focused on addressing the risk factors of the population as identified by the new diagnosis process.

The Department worked with the Courts to implement a Progressive Sanctions Policy to provide for swift, certain, and appropriate responses to probation violations.

The Department aggressively re-trained staff to assure that quality standards are met. Staff has been trained by national experts in evidence-based practices and has participated in intensive

planning and implementation processes. The Performance Evaluation system was overhauled to support this change.

The Department implemented an Absconder Unit. The absconder population has declined by over 50%.

The Department has revised the Sex Offender & Mental Health programs, showing a reduction in revocations/re-arrests for these populations.

The Department implemented a Counseling Center and expanded capacity of the SMART residential substance abuse treatment facility. Both programs were designed to adhere to best practices for correctional programs.

## How Has TCIS Impacted Revocations and the Costs of Incarceration?

TDCJ-CJAD December 1, 2008 Report to the Governor and LBB on The Monitoring of Community Supervision Diversion Funds showed that of the 10 most populous counties, Travis had the greatest reduction in revocations. All counties received Rider 84c funds. Three counties showed an increase in revocations (Bexar + 652 additional revocations or a 79.9% increase; Nueces +54 or 10.7% increase; Collin + 219 or a 91.6% increase). The following shows how Travis compared to the top 5.

CSCD	% Change in Revocations
Bexar	<b>+79.9% (Increase of 652)</b>
Dallas	-10.7%
Harris	-13.6%
Tarrant	-16.8%
Travis	-19.6%

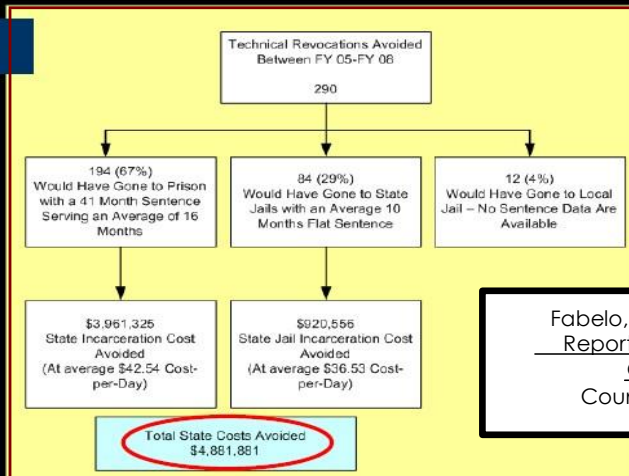
The Council of State Governments evaluation of Travis County CSCD on the implementation of Evidence-Based Practices showed that Travis County far exceeded the state average and other urban CSCDs in the reduction of technical revocations. The CSG report's cost-analysis ( based on LBB methodology) showed a **\$4.8M** cost-avoidance for the State of Texas (May 2009 Report by The Council of State Governments on Travis County Outcomes).

Felonies Technical Revocations			
County	FY 2005	FY 2008	Change FY05-08
Bexar (San Antonio)	478	854	78.6%
Dallas	2,174	1,515	-30.3%
Harris (Houston)	2,194	2,026	-7.5%
Tarrant (Ft. Worth)	1,012	761	-24.6%
Travis (Austin)	608	318	<b>-47.7%</b>
State Average	13,457	12,788	-4.9%

Source: Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Community Justice Assistance Division.  
Annual Statistical Data Spreadsheets, 2005 and 2007

## Cost-Savings Significant (Sentencing)

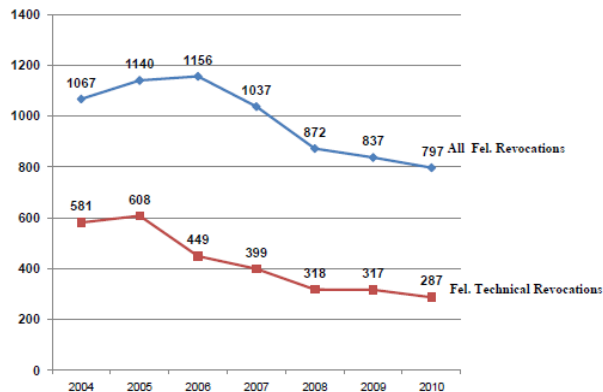
### Test General Trends



Fabelo, T & Eisenberg, M (2009) Final Report: Travis County Process and Outcome Evaluation. Council of State Governments.

Source: Cost-per-Day from Legislative Budget Board, "Criminal Justice Uniform Cost Report, FY 2004-2009", January 2007; Average sentence from Legislative Budget Board, "Texas Community Supervision Revocation Project: A Comparison of Revoked Felons During September 2005 and September 2007", August 2009; no data to estimate sentences and costs.

A multi-year graphical analysis of revocations in Travis County shows a sustained decline reversing a trend towards increasing revocation pre-2006. Using the same methodology reported above, the cost-savings are estimated at **\$15.5M** through September 30, 2010.



## How Has TCIS Affected Public Safety (Crime Rates)?

The Council of State Governments also found that Travis was effective in reducing new arrests by an average of 17%, with a 9% reduction for high-risk offenders, a 50% reduction for medium-risk and a 77% reduction for low-risk.

### One-Year Re-Arrest Rates Lower After TCIS

% Re-arrested 1 year later by Risk Level	Pre- TCIS	Post- TCIS	% Change in Rate Pre- to Post-TCIS
LOW	26%	6%	-77%
MED	26%	13%	-50%
HIGH	34%	31%	-9%
OVERALL	29%	24%	-17%

## **How Do Probationers Rate the Services of Travis County CSCD?**

**February 2010:** Texas A&M University-Central Texas researchers conducted a comprehensive customer service survey of probationers in three offices and found that 86% were satisfied with their supervision experience and 94% said that their officer worked with them to be successful (Berry, F. and G. Piechocki. (2010) Ongoing Research. Texas A&M University-Central Texas).

## **How Is Our National Reputation?**

**May 2007:** The Council of State Governments – Justice Center, with “seed” funding from TDCJ-CJAD, begins planning for publication of a “10 Step Guide for Re-engineering Probation Departments” based on Travis County CSCD. The publication is expected to be finalized and distributed nationally in the spring of 2011.

**2008-2010:** Director of Travis CSCD, Dr. Geraldine Nagy, is selected by National Center for State Courts to participate in national advisory groups on risk-assessment and evidence-based sentencing. Dr. Nagy is selected to train judges as trainers and to instruct courses for the judiciary in various locations and via on-line video through the NCSC web-site.

**August 2010:** American Probation & Parole Association presents their most prestigious award, the Walter Dunbar Award, to Dr. Geraldine Nagy.

**May 2006-April 2010:** Various publications highlight Travis County Outcomes.

- Miller McCune Magazine
- Texas Association of Counties Magazine
- Texas District and County Attorney Association – The Texas Prosecutor Journal
- Austin American Statesman
- American Probation & Parole Association Magazine – Perspectives

## **Where Can I Find More Information?**

Visit our website at [www.co.travis.tx.us/AdultProbation](http://www.co.travis.tx.us/AdultProbation) or contact us at 512-854-4600.